



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



In Brief:

Children, Youth and Families in the 2006 Legislative Session

The 2006 legislative session went far to promote the health, safety, and learning of Connecticut children. The most important legislation makes fundamental changes in the setting of budget priorities, putting the emphasis on results. Other gains include new investments in school readiness, after school programs, youth services, and family supports, including supportive housing, job training, and employment opportunities for low-income workers.

Cuts to the HUSKY health insurance program for low-income children were reversed, and the state settled a six-year-old lawsuit against it regarding Medicaid dental services for children. School children will eat and drink healthier food and beverages, and school districts are formulating wellness policies to increase exercise and healthy lifestyles.

Efforts to strengthen Connecticut's lead paint poisoning laws to meet the national goal of eradicating poisoning by 2010 made headway. Funds were allocated to make the public aware of the dangers of lead paint in housing and to train school personnel in identifying and serving the educational needs of children impacted by lead poisoning.

New Legislation Promoting the Health, Safety and Learning of Children



1. Prevention: Focus on What Works, Rather than Crisis

Goal: Connecticut will invest in proven prevention policies to improve child outcomes in health, safety, and learning.

Fact: less than 2 percent of the state budget is spent on prevention.

State Prevention Council Report, 2001

Vision 20/20: Connecticut sets a goal of realigning 10% of budget dollars for prevention services by 2020.

Public Act No. 06-179 – An Act Concerning State Investment in Prevention and Child Poverty Reduction and the Merger of the State Prevention and Child Poverty Councils

This bill:

- Reduces crisis spending and invests in proven prevention services that offer improved outcomes for children and youth in health, safety, and learning;
- Sets a goal of bringing the state's investment in prevention services up to 10% of the state budget by 2020;
- Mandates a report on prevention spending to be included in the state's biennial budget, to identify policies and programs that promote child health, learning, and wellness;
- Combines the work and goals of the Prevention Council into the work of the Child Poverty Council.

Public Act No. 06-164 – An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Child Poverty Council Related to Job Training and Child Wellness.

To reach the state goal of reducing child poverty by 50% over the next ten years, this bill:

- Allows the Office of Workforce Competitiveness to establish pilot programs giving parents who don't receive welfare access to training opportunities that will help them get and keep jobs;
- Requires the Departments of Social Services, Public Health and Mental Health and Addiction Services to disseminate information about services provided by the state's Nurturing Family Network;
- Funds \$6.5 million for job training and education of TANF recipients.



2. Healthy Expectations for All Children

Goal: Increase the number of children who are in good health.

Fact: DSS estimates that 80,000 children are uninsured in Connecticut at the same time HUSKY enrollment has declined by 10,000 from June 2004 to July 2005, and it continues to be static.

DSS Medicaid Report, December '05.

Public Act No. 06-188 – An Act Requiring A Study of State Social Services Institutions and Departments with Respect to the Expenditures of Such Institutions and Departments and the Programs Administered or Services Provided by Such Institutions and Departments.

New dollars for children's oral, mental and physical health, as follows:

- **HUSKY** - The omnibus social service and health bill includes provisions to restore self-declaration of income for recipients who are up for yearly re-enrollment. The Department will conduct random audits for quality control. The bill did not restore continuous eligibility, which would have allowed recipients to continue health coverage regardless of whether they had "officially" filled out all appropriate forms for enrollment;

- **EPSDT**- Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment for children in Medicaid is now required by state law and cannot be included in federal waivers of service;
- **Newborn Screening** - includes \$500,000 for a new newborn screening account;
- **Pilot Autism Spectrum Disorders Program** - Establishes a new program to provide coordinated system of supports and services for children and adults suffering from this disease;
- **Families with Service Needs** - Establishes a Families with Service Needs Advisory Board;
- **Medical Home Pilot** - Establishes a medical home pilot to enhance health outcomes for children in HUSKY to provide ongoing, coordinated care by primary physicians;
- **HUSKY A Services** - Requires reimbursement to home health care agencies that provide care in a child's home or child day care center.

New budget allocations for health: School-based health centers, \$1,029,702 (total \$7,676,462); HUSKY, \$1,970,000 (total \$29,220,000); Birth to Three Program, \$799,185 (total \$24,571,677); KidCare (Medicaid mental health program), \$1,276,404 (total \$24,190,985).

Public Act No. 06-131 – An Act Concerning Developmental Needs of Children and Youth with Cancer.

This act requires public and private insurance providers to cover neuron-psychological base line testing as part of standard of care for children with leukemia.

Nurturing Families - The home visitation and support program operated by the

Children's Trust Fund will be expanded to all 29 Connecticut birthing hospitals next year. In addition, funds are allocated to the city of New Haven to provide intensive home visitation services to 250 first time families. All 800 first-time mothers in New Haven will be screened, and 300 low-risk new mothers will be offered parenting information, support, and community referrals via the Nurturing Connections Program. (Budget of \$12.3 million in FY 2006, up from \$6.7 million in FY 2005.



3. Early Reading Success

Goal: Every child reading at grade level by fourth grade.

Fact: Six in ten (62%) Connecticut 4th graders are not proficient in reading.

2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress

Public Act No. 06-135 – An Act Implementing the Provisions of the Budget Concerning Education.

This bill strengthens the School Readiness Program and the Early Reading Success Grant, particularly for Priority School Districts. (The budget allocates \$19,747,286 for priority school districts and \$150,000 for a reading specialist administrator at the State Department of Education.) Specifically, the bill:

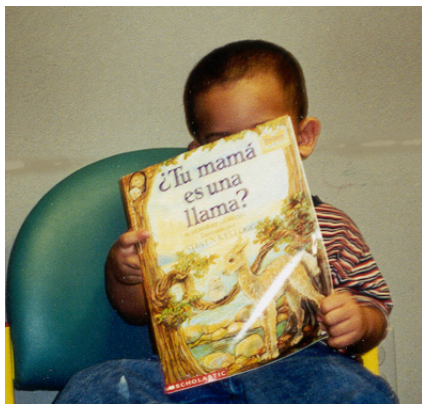
- Requires school districts to provide for on-site teacher training and coaching in the implementation of research-based reading

instruction based on the Reading Panel Blueprint;

- Requires school districts to report their progress in reducing the achievement gap in reading, including providing data and indicating how it is used to guide professional development and the coaching process;
- Focuses early intervention in grades 1 through 3 and requires ongoing assessment and attendance at summer school;
- Requires students in grades 4 through 6 to attend summer school if they are not reading at grade level;
- Specifies that students in grades 1 through 3 who are not reading at grade level shall not be promoted when all interventions have failed.

Public Act No. 06-154 – An Act Concerning the Early Childhood Education Workforce.

Establishes an ARC (alternative route to certification) for initial teacher certification with and endorsement in early childhood education.



4. Early Care and Education

Goal: Children have access to quality early care and education to achieve school readiness.

Fact: Federal Reserve Bank economists conclude that early childhood development has a 16% return on investment. The state Department of Education reports that in October 2005, 7,392 children aged 3 and 4 were receiving preschool instruction, and 6,900 were in priority school districts. Approximately 9,700 children in the 19 priority school districts are not being served. Several bills address the importance of quality educational experiences in the early years.

Public Act No. 06-135 – An Act Implementing the Provisions of the Budget Concerning Education

- Includes additional dollars for ERG I school readiness;
- Requires all school readiness programs to be accredited within three years of commencement and failure to do so would result in loss of funding;
- Allows unexpended school readiness funds to be used by the Department of Education for kindergarten student developmental evaluations or assessments;
- Requires school readiness programs to be included in the statewide public school information system and to report on student experiences in preschool by program type and by numbers of months in each such program, and 2) the readiness of students entering kindergarten and student progress in kindergarten. (by October 1, 2007)

Budget dollars: 1) increases school readiness grant by approximately \$8 million with \$3.5 million allocated to Connecticut's poorest seven ERG-I towns and more dollars to raise the grant rate from \$7,750 to \$8,025 in FY06-07. Also includes \$535,000 to add five additional severe needs schools to the program; 2) increases DSS funded centers by \$200,000; 3) Care 4 Kids adds \$1,717,263 (total 71,220,228)



5. Positive Youth Development: Youth Stay on Course

Goal: Youth Succeed in School, Make Good Decisions and Enter the Workforce Ready.

Fact: In 2004, the cumulative drop out rate was 8.8 % and in our most at risk districts (ERG I) the rate is more than 20%).

After School – There is no bill, but the budget includes \$5 million dollars for after school programs through DSS and SDE. The \$5 million dollars for the after school programs, \$1.4 million in DSS and \$3.1 million in SDE, to ensure quality after school opportunities for children and youth while parents work and school has ended to bolster social skills, cognition, and to decrease loitering, drug and sexual experimentation.

Public Act No. 06-182 – An Act Concerning Youth Policy and the Kinship Navigator Program.

Establishes a Youth Futures Committee led by the Connecticut Employment and Training Committee through the Office of Workforce Competitiveness to develop a comprehensive youth policy to better coordinate and leverage resources to serve youth ages 12-21 years of age. The bill embeds positive youth development goals to guide public policy decisions and hold systems accountable for results. Goals

include reduced juvenile delinquency; increased high school graduation and post secondary education; increased apprenticeship programs.

Department of Children and Families.

The budget covers a decisive shift in focus to smaller residential group homes and community based services for juveniles and prevention, except for 20 new positions in CJTS to meet the increased number of incarcerated youth from 85 to 115-125 youths. Highlights include: \$11,115,627 for juvenile outreach services; \$6,571,068 for community based prevention programs and funding for Juvenile Review Boards in New Haven and Hartford-\$350,000, and enhanced mental health services for youth at risk of out of home placement, \$3,510,000.

6. Juvenile Justice and Youth Employment

H.B. 5782 – An Act Concerning the Age of a Child for Purposes in Jurisdiction of Delinquency Matters and Proceedings

Raises the age for being treated a juvenile to age 18 years of age. Currently, youth over the age of 15 years are adjudicated in the adult court system. Although the bill died, \$450,000 is allocated in the budget and a Commission is established to study and implement the transfer of 16 and 17 year olds to the juvenile system.

In addition, the budget allocates \$4 million dollars for summer youth employment to the local Workforce Boards; allocates approximately \$ 4 million dollars for youth programs in cities. (Office of Policy and Management budget)

7. School-Family Partnerships; School Health, Safety, and Civics

Public Act No. 06-115 – An Act Concerning Bullying Policies in Schools and Notices Sent to Parents or Legal Guardians.

- Requires schools to create an anti-bullying policy, along with a way for students to become aware of the policy and to report bullying to teachers and other school personnel anonymously;
- Allows parents to file written reports of bullying to school officials. Each complaint of bullying will be dealt with in a case-by-case basis so that some bullies may receive counseling, some may receive discipline and others may receive both, depending on the type and number of complaints against a student;
- Allows parents who are separated or divorced or split for some reason or another to receive information, whether the child lives with them or not.



Public Act No. 06-63 – An Act Concerning Healthy Food and Beverages in Schools.

- Requires state and municipal public schools to only serve the following beverages: milk (both flavored and regular milk and without artificial sweeteners and less than four grams of sugar per ounce), milk substitute, such as rice milk or soy milk (both flavored and regular and without artificial sweeteners and less than four grams of sugar per ounce), 100% fruit or vegetable juice (without sweeteners) The size of these beverages cannot be any larger than 12 ounces, except for water. All soda is banned from sale during school hours and in vending machines;
- Allows all beverages, including soda, to be sold after school and at school events on weekends;
- By August 1, 2006 and each consecutive January 1 after, the State Department of Education will put out a new set of nutrition guidelines that will be published for the school districts to use. Nonpublic schools may also participate in this program, except that they will not be eligible for funding;
- Requires all schools participating in the National School Lunch Program to serve food in accordance with nutrition standards developed by the State Department of Education;
- Requires the State Department of Education to develop a procedure for monitoring compliance with the nutrition standards;
- **Budget:** Increases the per pupil reimbursement for school lunches by 10 cents per meal for a total of 15 cents per meal and ties the funding to the nutritional standards.

Public Act No. 06-167 – An Act Concerning Parent Involvement Reporting in School Profiles.

The bill requires each school district to include in the mandated school profile a report on policies and practices concerning parent involvement in the education of their child.

H.B. 5520 – An Act Concerning Democracy Education in Elementary Schools.

The bill seeks to impart civic participation skills to students in fourth or fifth grades by requiring curriculum to include “participatory” learning of all branches of government. No action



8. Family Strength: Safety and Health

Legislation expands medical leave for foster parents, enhances permanency placement for children in DCF care, and extends the support for DCF youth up until age 21 years old.

Public Act No. 06-102 – An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave for State Employees, Services for Individuals Eighteen Years of Age and Older in the Care and Supervision of the Commissioner of Children and families

Permanency Plans for Children, and Employment Accommodations for Members of the General Assembly.

This bill is a combination of Raised Bills 5505, 159, 6, 5648, 463, and 23.

- Medical Leave: allows state employees to take a leave of absence, without pay, for a total of 24 weeks over 2 years for caring for foster child, child or parent;
- Extends the care of any child who reaches his or her 18th birthday to voluntarily stay under the care of the Department of Children and Families until his or her 21st birthday, if the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families states that it would be in the best interest of the child to remain under the care of DCF;
- Requires Department of Children and Families to create or outline a plan for every child under its care, including children who remain in the care of DCF until their 21st birthday;
- Requires DCF to report to the Governor, every February 15th on the status of all children under the care of DCF in order to monitor and track the progress of children place in permanent homes;
- Requires the Department of Children and Families to make every reasonable effort to keep the child with his/her parents, if at all possible and if reunification is not possible, DCF will try to avoid placing children in several different homes.

Public Act No. 06-43 – An Act Concerning the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons.

This bill:

- Makes human trafficking a Class B felony and keeps prostitution as a Class A misdemeanor;

- Adds members to the Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons, as well as having the task force do more to protect and help victims of human trafficking;
- Allocates money given to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Police Officer Standards and Training Council, Division of Criminal Justice, and Judicial Department for additional training and resources to protect more people and compensate the victims of human trafficking, as well as to punish human traffickers.



Prepared: June 20, 2006

Public Act No. 06-182 – An Act Concerning Youth Policy and the Kinship 211 Infoline.

This bill allocates \$91,000 to DSS to enhance the current Infoline to include information about services available for grandparents. Grandparents raising grandchildren is a growing reality in Connecticut with an estimated 16,388 children in their primary care.

Public Act No. 06-52 – An Act Concerning Farmer's Markets.

The bill promotes healthy, nutritious farm grown products in Connecticut's Farmer's Markets and increases access for low income families through the federal WIC programs. Families will now have opportunity to buy an array of farm products including fresh fruits and vegetables, honey, maple syrup, flowers, meat, milk and cheese.